

## WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT PROMOTES INTEGRATION

On March 31, 1998, well ahead of the signing of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Governor Mel Carnahan advised department directors involved in workforce development activities of his intention to integrate fragmented employment and training services into a new Division of Workforce Development.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 places a strong emphasis on integrating employment and training services at One-Stop Career Centers. **[Appendix p. 93]** The U.S. Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman, prepared the following message to Americans regarding the impact of the Act. She stated...

*"... As Secretary of Labor, one of my chief goals is bridging the gap between job opportunities and the pool of workers who are qualified to fill them. I want to equip every American worker with skills that will not only secure a good job, but guarantee every step up the workforce ladder leads to even greater opportunities.*

*That is why the Department of Labor worked with Congress to create the historic Workforce Investment Act, signed into law this year. Five years in the making, the Workforce Investment Act represents a total overhaul of our country's job-training system -- a customer-driven overhaul that will help employers get the workers they need and empower job seekers to meet the challenges of the new century by getting the training they need for the jobs they want.*

*The Workforce Investment Act makes this possible through an innovative "One-Stop" system designed to provide a full menu of job*

*training, education and employment services at a single neighborhood location where adults, veterans, dislocated workers and youth will receive skills assessment services, information on employment and training opportunities, unemployment, services, job search and placement assistance, and up-to-date information on job vacancies -- all at one center specifically tailored to meet the needs of the community it serves.*

*Best of all, job seekers will control their own careers by choosing the training programs and services that fit their needs. And they'll keep that control for life. So when it's time to make another move up the career ladder, sharpen a skill, learn a new one, or just get information, workers will be able to continue to rely on their local One-Stop Career Center.*

*The Workforce Investment Act also provides for increased accountability. The performance of states, localities and training providers will be monitored against goals set by the Act -- including job placement rates, earnings, retention in employment, and skill gains. Failure to meet the goals will lead to sanctions, while exceeding them will lead to incentive funds.*

*But the Workforce Investment Act is more than a new job training system. It's a strong network of interlinked programs designed to provide wide choices to Americans seeking new opportunities and valuable information. And, it's a chance for us to harness today's opportunities for success and invest them in the workforce of tomorrow. . ."*

Significant strides have been made in Missouri toward One-Stop Career Center service delivery. The Workforce Investment Act

of 1998 reinforces and actually mandates the movement to consolidate and provide workforce development services through a One-Stop Career Center System. It is imperative this effort move forward by combining workforce development resources, eliminating duplication, and focusing on customer choice. The past progress in Missouri will make the implementation of this law a much simpler process.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 represents the first major reform of the nation's job training system in over 15 years. By eliminating many of the administrative and regulatory barriers that have previously existed, the Act provides states and local communities with the tools needed to build an integrated workforce development system. It requires a joint plan for Workforce Investment Act and Wagner-Peyser activities. One-Stop Career Centers are promoted as a way to revitalize the employment and training service delivery system.

The Act promotes community-based design and control of One-Stop Career Centers by establishing Workforce Investment Boards. Given the requirement for strong private sector participation (employers, labor, educators, community groups, etc.), the community-based boards will foster fresh ideas about local labor markets and encourage quality and continuous improvement. The Workforce Investment Boards will assist the One-Stop Career Centers to earn the sustained support of local business leaders and job seekers.

Currently employers comprise the bulk of the membership in the local governing boards. They will remain strong partners in the local delivery mechanism under the Workforce Investment Act. Employer-based partnerships (Private Industry Councils) were established in the Job Training Partnership Act and this concept has been continued as the Act promotes community-

based design and control of One-Stop Career Centers by establishing Workforce Investment Boards. The Workforce Investment Board will be appointed by the chief local elected official and be comprised of a majority of representatives of business. The Boards will also include local educational entities, labor organizations, community based organizations, economic development agencies, and each of the One-Stop Career Center partners providing services through One-Stop Career Centers. Given this requirement for strong private sector participation the community-based boards will foster fresh ideas about local labor markets and encourage quality and continuous improvement. The Workforce Investment Boards will assist the One-Stop Career Centers in earning the sustained support of local business leaders and job seekers.

Many of the workforce development partners also have similar functions of these councils. Currently there are at least five different councils operating at the local level that may be duplicating workforce development activities. These include:

- Private Industry Councils;
- Regional Technical Education Councils;
- Job Service Employer Committees;
- Community Partnership Councils; and
- School to Work Partnership Councils.

Some of these councils are mandated by federal funding conditions, but where possible consolidation and or closer coordination of these various boards would provide less duplication of effort, better oversight, and more positive direction to all the partners in the Workforce Development System. In a similar fashion workforce development activities should be consolidated at the State level with oversight to the current Missouri Training and Employment Council. As the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 is implemented, these functions should be

transferred to the State Workforce Investment Board.

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As the new Workforce Development System, as proposed in this document is implemented, care should be taken to ensure full compliance with the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

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Source of Information: U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and the Workforce Development Transition Team

